

# Indiana House of Representatives

## News and Information

*Media Office  
Democratic Caucus  
John Schorg, Director  
Statehouse, Room 157  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204  
1-800-382-9842 or 1-317-232-9621  
Fax Number: 1-317-232-9792*

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### **BARDON: STATEHOUSE GIFT SHOP, MUSEUM IS WASTE OF MONEY, SPACE**

INDIANAPOLIS – Efforts by some state lawmakers to renovate portions of the Indiana Statehouse into a museum and gift shop are not well thought out and could turn out to be a big waste of taxpayer money and space, according to State Rep. Jeb Bardon (D-Indianapolis), a member of an interim committee set up to study the issue.

"As a student of Indiana history, I am very much in favor of giving people every chance to find out more about our state," Bardon said. "The three best places in Indianapolis to discover Indiana's history are the Indiana State Museum, the Indiana Historical Society, and the Indiana State Library. All three are located within walking distance of the Statehouse."

During the initial meeting of the Statehouse Museum Committee, Bardon and other lawmakers toured potential sites for the museum, gift shop and a possible visitor's center. Most of the discussion focused on locating these sites in the basement of the Statehouse in an area that houses primarily the media.

"It is being portrayed by some that the space occupied by the Statehouse press corps is the only area that is available for this sort of complex," Bardon noted. "However, after touring only half of the basement level of the Statehouse, it's clear to me that there is a great deal of space in this building that is underutilized or just plain wasted."

"Indeed, if this tour proved anything, it's that a comprehensive study needs to be done of the entire building," Bardon stated. "Taxpayers are footing the bill for the state to rent office space around downtown, while we were able to find rooms full of junk that need to be cleaned out in the basement of our own Statehouse. Just think what is upstairs at the Statehouse and behind the locked doors in the basement that no one could unlock for us."

Bardon also said he would oppose any effort to move the Statehouse press corps out of the capitol.

"What the tour highlighted to me was that perhaps we should be asking ourselves how healthy it is for democracy to allow checks and balances to be deteriorated or even eliminated," he said. "The press plays a crucial role in maintaining vigilance over government, and we should be working for more openness in government and better access for the media to the process."

"I want to see the media's access to state government strengthened," Bardon emphasized. "I have the feeling that some folks in this process would be happier to see the media moved out of the Statehouse altogether, something which should concern anyone who supports an open and honest government."

"At a time when state finances are tight and schools and local governments are hurting, I will not support this effort unless it is funded privately and we evaluate space utilization for the entire building in the process," he concluded.

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